

Pest Fact sheet No 10

Spider beetles

Name Spider beetles

Latin name Ptinidae

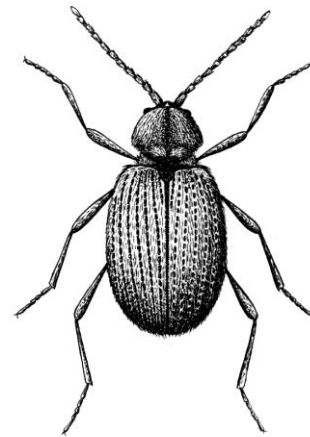
Size Adults 5 – 7 mm long



Identification features

Adult

There are many species with a superficially similar appearance. They are all globular beetles with a round thorax and round abdomen. The head is not visible from above and the long antennae appear to come from the thorax. Most species are hairy and some are covered with dense hairs on the body and legs.



Different species

Australian spider beetle *Ptinus tectus*.

Brown beetle with hairs and lines on the wing cases.
Thorax with two cushions of hairs



Golden spider beetle
Niptus hololeucus.

Long-legged golden beetle covered in gold hairs with a globular body.



White marked spider beetle
Ptinus fur.

There is a big difference in the sexes. The female is a globular dark brown beetle with patches of white hairs on wing cases. The males are pale brown and much thinner [see image].



Life cycle

The adults are longer-lived than many beetle pests and their natural home is bird or animal nests. They also thrive in dirty, undisturbed areas where there are dead insects or old food. The length of the life cycle is normally 12 months but depending upon the temperature, humidity and the nutrition of the food, it can be as short as 6 months. The larvae live in tunnels which they bore through food. They will excavate cavities in food and other materials when they are ready to pupate. The pupae are surrounded by a globular silk cocoon from which the adult will eventually emerge.

Larvae

The larvae are white and curved with spiky hairs. They are rarely seen as they live in the good and cannot walk. They are sometimes found on insect traps in fireplaces when they have fallen down the chimney from debris above.



Signs of Infestation

Adults are frequently found in small numbers on insect traps in fireplaces in historic houses. Larvae will make holes and gnaw cavities in wood and other materials when they are ready to pupate.

Materials damaged

They are pests of starchy food and may be found in flour, biscuits, pet food and cereals. However, they will also attack herbarium specimens and taxidermy. Books may also be attacked when there is a lot of starch or animal glue in the bindings.

Signs of damage

The larvae will tunnel through the food as they eat and also gnaw cavities in wood and other materials when they pupate. Some herbarium sheets or books may look as if they have been eaten by furniture beetles, *Anobium* [Fact sheet 1], or biscuit beetles, *Stegobium* [Fact sheet 7]. However, the holes are larger and often more irregular.



Similar species

Sometimes confused with furniture beetle, *Anobium* [Fact sheet 1], or biscuit beetle, *Stegobium* [Fact sheet 7].

There are other less common species of spider beetles such as:

the shiny spider beetle, *Gibbium equinoctiale*,
the globular spider beetle *Trigonogenius globulus*
and the American spider beetle, *Mezium americanum*.